

**Opening Statement of Chairman Fred Upton**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Hearing on “DOE for the 21st Century:**  
**Science, Environment, and National Security Missions”**  
**February 24, 2016**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

Today we consider the recommendations of two distinguished panels that examined the Department of Energy's most important functions – maintaining the strength of our nuclear security enterprise and the national laboratory system that underpins the scientific and technological work that supports nuclear security and other DOE missions.

The work of the department is vital to the nation. The testimony plainly explains the stakes if DOE loses its edge on the nuclear deterrent, on nuclear security and its naval programs, on its technological superiority. So as we look at DOE's structure and decision-making for confronting the challenges of the 21st century, we have to focus on these fundamental operations to be sure they are working at maximum potential. I want to commend the panelists for their work in outlining what should be done to meet this goal.

The story of DOE's management and performance shortcomings, particularly when it comes to its nuclear work, is long and unpleasant. During my time as Oversight Subcommittee Chairman over 15 years ago we took a hard look at agency failures in security and project management, pressuring the agency to reform. Some reforms have worked and some clearly have not taken hold. In recent years, as demonstrated by our oversight of security failures at nuclear weapons production sites, safety failures at the national laboratories, and contractor oversight failures overall, the reforms of 2000 did not achieve the results Congress envisioned.

Under my chairmanship, under previous chairmanships, the goal of Energy and Commerce has been to ensure the accountability to the president, through the Secretary of Energy, for the safety, security, management, and ultimate performance of DOE's nuclear weapons and nuclear security enterprise. This accountability has been put to the test, particularly in the wake of the creation of the semi-autonomous National Nuclear Security Administration.

The panelists today make a very important point: Cabinet-level leadership, by the Secretary of Energy, is essential for the success of DOE, particularly its nuclear security mission. We'll discuss a key recommendation to strengthen the secretary's ownership of this mission today, which will require continued administration and congressional focus on making sure future secretaries are well prepared for their nuclear security responsibilities. Solidifying secretary's ownership of his nuclear security responsibility also includes reforms to the governance structure of NNSA. The goal is to allow for the best of NNSA's focused mission and to discard the duplicative, inefficient structures and offices that inhibit operations and restrict the ability to benefit from all the technological, operational, management experience of the full department.

This is a worthy goal that we must collectively work toward. The big lesson is that DOE's safety, security, and contract management problems span administrations, span Congresses. From my experience, and as our witnesses will explain, improving DOE's performance requires long, sustained attention to ensure sustained improvement in agency performance. DOE has huge responsibilities that will not go away. This committee's job will be to ensure the department is managed to meet these responsibilities, and structured to ensure they are executed to their full potential and in the best interest of the American taxpayer. This hearing continues this important work.

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